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ABSTRACT

This chapter contains a dialogue that challenges philosophical and practical divisions both inside and outside the academy regarding the development of literacy and literary competence in foreign language departments. It also describes curricular revisions that address those divisions. One author crafts an argument for reform based on the notion that a thorough rethinking of the understanding of the nature of language is required. Rather than continuing to support educational practices that separate language and knowledge, the author proposes that pedagogical approaches must reflect an understanding of language as a humanly constructed meaning-making model of reality. This understanding of language as a social semiotic presumes an integration of language and knowledge that can shape a new understanding of the nature of language and literacy. To illustrate how these concepts play out in the classroom setting, the other author outlines a course that achieves a symbiosis of content and language instruction--a course in which students are encouraged to evolve beyond communicative goals to achieve nuanced interpretations of literary texts and, by extension, human experiences. The authors weave an argument for curricular reform that integrates language and content at all levels of instruction. (Contains 76 references.) (SM)

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The Gordian Knot: Language, Literature, and Critical Thinking

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In his 1990 article entitled *Bandwagons Revisited: A Perspective on Movements in Foreign Language*, Frank Grittner discusses what he sees as the cyclical nature of SLA theory and pedagogy. In response to disappointment with the results produced by a given language teaching approach, new methodologies are developed to replace it. These at first generate a great deal of enthusiasm and are promoted as the new "key" to effective pedagogy. When results fail to meet expectations, the new methodologies fall into disfavor, soon to be replaced either by new ones, or, more often than not, by a return to former ones (p. 14).

The current renewed attention to the incorporation of literature into the foreign language curriculum might at first blush seem to fit into Grittner's cyclical paradigm of teaching methodologies. It is undeniably true that for literally generations of students, the study of literature constituted the cornerstone of language learning. As Grittner himself points out, for various grammar-translation methods, which can trace their origins back at least to ancient Greece, a significant amount of time was devoted to the translation of literature as a means by which to develop linguistic skill and to convey knowledge about the foreign culture (p. 19). However, with the rise of the oral proficiency movement and the development of communicative methodologies, which emphasize speaking skills in real-life practical situations, the focus on the literary text fell into disfavor. Not only did literature seem not to respond to the need for authentic, contemporary, primarily oral linguistic input, but the often highly stylized and sophisticated language of the literary text, which formerly had been seen as providing examples of refined linguistic structures to emulate, came to be considered far too difficult and therefore inappropriate for the language learner. In fact, the 1986 version of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines does not include literature in its curricular recommendations until learners' language abilities are at an "advanced" level (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 1986). Now, however, seemingly in keeping with Grittner's analysis, methods emphasizing oral language skills, and

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particularly those excluding literature from the curriculum, are being called into question. Under pressure primarily from literature faculty, who often find their students unprepared in terms of their ability to deal with texts, language faculty are again focusing their attention on the effective use of literature in their curricula in order to provide their lower division students the linguistic and analytical skills necessary for success at upper division levels. There is a very real concern that if students do not have some experience in dealing with literature fairly early in their language studies, they might not be able to pursue more advanced work later. Regarding communicative methodologies and the need for literature in the language curriculum, Heidi Byrnes (1997) writes:

> that students need to be led in a well-motivated fashion, beginning with their first college language courses, away from the highly contingent language use in largely interactional oral communication of meanings that has in recent years become the momentum driving their language acquisition; faculty members must introduce students to the linguistically considerably more elaborated environments of written language and particularly to literary texts. In other words, language instruction must attend to the formal appropriateness, accuracy, and complexity of students' interlanguage and must assume that students' language use reflects the ways in which highly differentiated meanings are constructed in extended discourse and texts (Byrnes 1997, p. 9).

In regard to literature's place in the curriculum, SLA theory does indeed seem to be on a "literature-no literature-return to literature" cycle.

The seeming alignment of the current SLA explorations of literature's potential with Grittner's paradigm of the cyclical nature of foreign language methodologies is at best a superficial one, however. Although the effort to grapple with the most effective ways of incorporating more literature into language study may seem to be yet again another attempt to reinvent the proverbial wheel, the current motivation to do so derives from an understanding both of the literary text and of what it means to learn a foreign language that is radically different from those that drove either the grammar-translation or communicative approaches. By coming to grips with a revitalized language/literature dynamic we can work toward an understanding of what in fact is so radically different about the renewed call for more literature in the language curriculum, particularly in light of recommendations set forth in the recently published *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the Twenty-First Century* (1999). Moreover, such

an understanding will help both to further current goals for greater articulation along the language/literature continuum and to contribute to the development of strategies for the effective incorporation of literature in language programs.

Part I: Historical Overview of the Literary Text in the Language Curriculum

As mentioned above, for many generations of language learners, literature served as the cornerstone of their studies, which tended to be based on various grammar-translation approaches. The use of literature within this context had a very clear rationale. With oral and aural skills relegated to a position of significantly less importance than reading skills, the focus of instruction fell heavily on the accurate mastery of grammar and vocabulary (Brauer 2000). The literary text served very well the pedagogical goals of this approach, providing authentic material consisting of a rich vocabulary and often complex grammatical constructions. In terms of practice in translation, the literary text could prove a rigorous exercise in the accurate rendering of meaning, either in going from the original language to L2 or vice versa. The effective translation of texts was, in fact, often considered a hallmark of linguistic mastery, if not an art in itself (see Benjamin 1955). However, literature's role was not simply to supply material designed to foster the acquisition of vocabulary, sophisticated grammatical constructions in context, and texts for advanced translation exercises. The study of literature itself was, indeed, the ultimate goal of language learning (Brauer 2000, p. 5).

This conception of the primary goal of language learning had a very decisive effect on the pedagogy of the literary text. Aside from the significant attention to translation activity, discussion of texts came to play a prominent role in more advanced language classes. The discussion was very narrowly focused, however, with questions concentrating on vocabulary and grammar from a linguistic or rhetorical point of view and on comprehension checks. For example, one very well respected French textbook published in 1968, and intended as a reader for advanced students, presents excerpts from the "classics" of French literature (Maman, Helstrom, Abel, Bourque, Hull, and Politzer 1968). Prereading material situates a given text in terms of literary history and the author's biography. Postreading questions check for comprehension of plot and of the subtleties of the French language, asking, for example, what the author means by a given figure of speech. What is significant about this approach is that it posits the literary text as a fixed object of study with a correct answer to each question posed. In

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this view, literature is relegated to the status of a cultural artifact that mirrors both the historical period during which it was written and various aspects of the author's life. To understand a literary text in the language classroom was to understand all the words and the grammar and to be able to summarize the plot. Moreover, in many advanced literature courses prior to the sixties, when we see a significant change in sensibilities, texts were taught as products of their time and of the individual author's experiences and as essentially closed entities best handled by specialists. The lay reader's direct interpretative interaction with texts was generally discounted as invalid.

Part II: A New View of Literature; A New View of Language

Although it is not within the purview of this article to review the evolution of modern literary criticism, an overview of two intertwining trends, semiotics and reader-response theory, can help clarify for both language and literature teachers how certain shifts in the understanding of literature, particularly pertaining to the nature of the text and the reader's relationship to it, can affect the use of literature in the language classroom. Simply put, both trends in contemporary theory signaled a movement away from historical and biographical criticism which required knowledge outside the text itself, and opened up the appreciation and interpretation of literature to all readers. It was not that literary studies became less demanding, soliciting a kind of free-for-all in terms of the subjective interpretation of texts (see Hirsch 1976). On the contrary, the tools necessary for the effective interpretation of literature, particularly at advanced levels, could be extremely rigorous, often necessitating a firm grounding in linguistic theory which is not without relevance for foreign language study (see Culler 1975). However, there was a very definite demystification of literature that was accompanied by the tacit understanding that interpretative skills could be taught to students and that texts could be appreciated as entities in and of themselves, even if the reader had no particular knowledge of their historical context or the author's life. The text now was no longer seen only as a closed historical and sociocultural artifact for imperialistic study, where readers have the impression of understanding it because they are privy to hard facts concerning it and can situate it within its historical and biographical contexts. Rather, the emphasis in literature centered on the text as autonomous and as an open and dynamic entity of plural meanings and multiple interpretative possibilities. Moreover, individual readers, through a combination of their own intellectual skills and personal experiences, were

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seen as capable of generating interesting and original interpretations of texts, albeit with guidance from teachers.

This view of literary texts has radical implications for the study of literature in language courses. Perhaps one of the most provocative critics to play an early pivotal role not only in changing our concept of literature, but also in reconciling it with linguistics is the French semiologist Roland Barthes, whose distinction between "readable" and "writable" texts is crucial to understanding the dynamic interpretative role that readers play in coming to terms with literature. Barthes's theory is perhaps best outlined in the introduction to *S/Z* (1970). Here he defines the readable text as the text that is fundamentally closed to multiple interpretative possibilities. It consists of formulaic stories written according to accepted conventions, or even the "classic" whose interpretation has become fossilized within its often canonical literary category. According to this view the reader is fundamentally a passive consumer of literature (p. 10). The "writable" text, on the other hand, is the work that directly involves the reader's interpretative skills, making him or her an active producer of meaning through individualized interactions with the text (p. 10).

Barthes's view of the reader as writer derives from a radically different view of literature itself. Rather than the closed "readable" text defined by literary history and authorial biography and by its denotative elements, the "writable" text depends on its connotative potential. Barthes envisions the text as a whole that nevertheless radiates an infinite number of connotations that invite dynamic, multiple interpretative possibilities. According to Barthes, "Topologically, the connotation assures a (limited) dissemination of the meanings, spread as gold dust on the apparent surface of the text (the meaning is the gold). Semiologically, the entire connotation is a departure from a code (which will never be reconstituted), the articulation of a voice which is woven into the text (p. 16)."[1] Instead of one fixed interpretation attributed to the text, it consists of approximations of meaning that create a work that is always redefining itself with every reading and every reader (pp. 16–17). Readers themselves are thus seen as bringing to texts their own individual, complex views consisting of diverse experiences and previous readings. "The more the text is plural the less it is written before I read it . . . This 'self' that approaches the text is already himself a plurality of other texts, of infinite codes . . ." (p. 16).

Barthes's pioneering work on the nature of texts and readers holds numerous resonances with other semiotic and reader-response views, many of which have contributed to SLA and applied linguistic theory (see Davis 1989; Shanahan 1997). Michel Riffaterre (1979), Jurij Lotman (1973), Umberto Eco (1979), Louise Rosenblatt (1978), and

Wolfgang Iser (1978) all deal with texts as plural entities of multiple interpretative possibilities always in the process of evolving and with readers as highly complex individuals whose schemata (see Rumelhart 1981) consist of vast repositories of personal experiences that influence their interactions and interpretations of texts. For the French semiotician Michel Riffaterre (1979), for example, literary meaning can only be a product of interactions between readers and texts. "The literary phenomenon is not only the text, but also its reader and the collection of the reader's possible reactions to the text" (p. 9). Louise Rosenblatt (1978) insists that readers "must bring a whole body of cultural assumptions, practical knowledge, awareness of literary conventions, readiness to think and feel" to the text (p. 88) and that "Not the words, as uttered sounds or inked marks on a page, constitute the poem, but the structured responses to them" (p. 14).

The Russian semiotician Jurij Lotman (1973) espouses a complex theory of literature, seeing the text as a multiplanar entity of intersecting constructs of signifiers, all of which can be understood in terms of linguistic systems. For him, the text is a highly condensed form of artistic information; and in order to have access to this information, the human conscious, which Lotman defines as a linguistic conscious (p. 37), must also possess its unique "language." Once engaged in the decoding "game" of literature, readers' interactions produce very powerful effects on them, enabling them to live vicariously an infinite range of experiences, to access worlds and cultures no longer existent or that may never exist, to define themselves more fully, and ultimately to control better their reactions to unknown and even threatening experiences.

> The game possesses an enormous significance during the learning process of a type of behavior, for it allows for the modeling of the situations in which the unprepared individual would be threatened with death . . . he learns to model this situation in his consciousness, since under the guise of the game he represents an amorphous system of reality whose rules can be formulated. . . . the game gives man the possibility of a conventional victory over the invincible. . . . it helps him overcome fear when faced with identical situations and forms an indispensable structure of emotions for practical activity (p. 105).

Like Barthes, Lotman also emphasizes the unique individuality of all readers and the consequent multiplicity of interpretative responses. ". . . the artistic text . . . gives to different readers different information —to each according to his understanding—it also gives the reader a language from which he can assimilate the next portion of information during a rereading. It acts as a living organism which finds itself

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in an inverse relationship with the reader and which instructs him" (p. 55).

The German reader response critic Wolfgang Iser (1978), whose theories have had an important impact on the work of Janet Swaffar and other applied linguists in understanding the reading processes of foreign language learners (Davis 1989; Swaffar 1988; Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes 1991), also reacts to the view of the literary text as a fixed totality to which one concrete, definitive interpretation can be attributed, insisting instead that "the meaning of a literary text is not a definable entity but, if anything, a dynamic happening" (p. 22), which allows us "to experience things that no longer exist and to understand things that are totally unfamiliar to us" (p. 19). For Iser, the interaction between the reader and the text is so complete and so intimate that both merge into one single situation where meaning can no longer be understood as existing outside the reader as an object to be known but rather as "an effect to be experienced" (pp. 9–10).

Although there are very real theoretical differences among each of these critics, they all intersect in their views of texts as intricate, multidimensional systems of connotative codes that are interpretatively realized according to the reader's equally complex and individual interactions. Moreover, the reader's participation in the dynamics of the text on an individual basis is important precisely for the *changes* textual interaction provoke *within* him. Iser perhaps best reconciles the subjective with the objective interpretative responses by emphasizing the restructuring of personal experience that reading engenders. He says:

> The experience of the text . . . is brought about by an interaction that cannot be designated as private or arbitrary. What is private is the reader's incorporation of the text into his own treasure-house of experience, but as far as the reader-oriented theory is concerned, this simply means that the subjectivist element of reading comes at a later stage in the process of comprehension than critics of the theory may have supposed: namely, where the aesthetic effect results in a restructuring of experience (p. 24).

The concept of change within the reader, of his or her restructured experience is crucial for understanding the dramatic impact of literature on the development of higher-level critical thinking skills, particularly as they relate to the endeavor of learning a foreign language. Daniel Shanahan (1997) makes explicit this relationship when he writes:

> Because of language's unique role as a vehicle for higher cognitive functions, which also makes it the ideal medium through which to

> view some of those functions, discussion of language tends to focus on the cognitive . . . it is quite clear that language has roots deep in the affective dimension of the human experience, and the nature of that relationship is critical to our understanding of the process of language learning, especially with respect to the role of literature and culture and to the way in which they can contribute to what we might call the "affective magnet," that is, the power to turn affect into an inducement rather than an obstacle to learning (p. 169).

It is precisely this relationship between language, literature, and cognition that we shall examine in Part III.

Part III: Literature and Critical Thinking

Although the topic of critical thinking skills enters frequently into general discussions of educational goals, and increasingly into deliberations concerning language pedagogy, specific definitions are difficult to pin down. John McPeck (1981) offers a number of insights into the term, defining critical thinking as "reflective skepticism," wherein norms or traditional ways of doing things are called into question. Ultimately, the conventional might be accepted, but never automatically without thought (p. 6). According to McPeck, critical thinking skills can be taught by inculcating in learners the intellectual skills, methods, and modes of reflection relevant to the discipline, by focusing on the cognitive processes set in motion in grappling with a problem and by helping learners to know what questions to ask. All of these notions will be important to keep in mind when dealing with the teaching of literature in the language classroom.

Paul Ramsden (1992) overlaps with McPeck's analysis but is more schematic in his definitions of lower- and higher-level critical thinking skills. In surface approaches to learning, students focus fundamentally on the superficial aspects of tasks. In dealing with texts, for example, learners concentrate on words and sentences without integrating them into the general context. They depend on memorized information and discrete facts but without reflecting on their relevance to deeper issues; and they fail to hone in on general theoretical principles, treating examples rather as separate units in and of themselves (p. 46). The result of surface learning for Ramsden is that it distorts material and texts by privileging the limited understanding of parts, which gives the impression of comprehension, over a complex understanding of the intricate whole. In deep learning, students are more synthetic and global in their approaches, since they draw on previous knowledge and theoretical principles, often from other disciplines, in their efforts

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to solve a problem or to grasp a text as a coherent totality (p. 46). The student who employs higher level critical thinking skills to problems focuses on the paradoxical and problematic and attempts to organize and reconfigure the diverse elements of content into a structured whole that casts the problem or text in a new and original light. Ramsden further subdivides his concept of levels of learning and text comprehension. On the first level are the "what" of learning, which is defined as the "meaning aspect: that which is experienced; the significance of the task," and the "how" of learning (p. 43), which is the "structural aspect: the act of experiencing, of organizing, of structuring." These are then further subdivided. The "what" of the task is divided into the "surface" aspect, where the focus is on the "signs" of the text or the word-sentence level. The "deep" aspect focuses on what the task is about or on the author's intention. The "how" category is divided into the "atomistic" aspect, which "distorts the structure, focuses on the parts, segments the whole," and the "holistic" aspect, which "preserves the structure, focuses on the whole in relation to the parts" (p. 42).

Ramsden's (1992) analysis, together with McPeck's (1981), contributes significantly to our understanding of the potential of literary texts to encourage the development of critical thinking skills. According to Ramsden's definitions, surface learning coincides with our previous discussions of grammar-translation and traditionalist approaches to literature in the language classroom, where the focus is on the word and sentence levels of language and on the accurate translation of texts from one language into another. Also within this category resides the impression of text comprehension based on access to historical and biographical facts and defined as the ability to summarize the plot.[2] Concepts of deep learning, on the other hand, articulate closely with approaches to literature that do not see the text as a closed and narrowly defined entity. The emphasis on synthesis and global approaches, drawing from other fields and previous knowledge, and on approaches to texts in terms of lived-through experience reverberates significantly with the definitions proposed by Barthes (1970), Riffaterre (1979), Lotman (1973), Rosenblatt (1978), and Iser (1978). The text, by its very nature, invites and even requires readers to engage in dynamic levels of deep learning, thereby developing their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, in that literature often calls into question the accepted, the traditional, and the prejudicial, the effective reader of texts must approach them with a measure of "reflective skepticism."

In their discussion of critical thinking, the French researchers Bourgeois and Nizet (1997) focus on concepts of change within the learner and on the restructuring of experience as key to understanding

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deep learning. They insist that prior knowledge is essential, because learning cannot take place in a void. However, according to their constructivist model, there is a certain inclination toward stasis on the part of the learner who tends to construct a closed articulatory loop around a specific configuration of knowledge, a loop that channels, and perhaps limits, other cognitive challenges. In order for true deep learning to take place, a conflictual element must enter the loop and destabilize the system. With this new element, preexisting structures of knowledge, which have been stored in memory, are activated and restructured to accommodate the new information and thereby to restore equilibrium within the knowledge structure. "If learning supposes . . . the preexistence of prior knowledge and the mobilization of this knowledge in the learning situation, this knowledge can only be transformed if it enters into conflict with new information or, in other words, if the confrontation between prior knowledge and the new information leads to a significant destabilization of the former" (p. 34). Because deep learning depends on change within the individual's cognitive structure, it is important that teaching methods not only introduce new information that will encourage students to question their previous assumptions, but also provide students the means to integrate this information into new knowledge structures, thereby fostering the development of critical thinking.

> [T]he only way to break a closed loop is the introduction of change. It is a question of making the subject gain access to a metatheoretical frame which will permit him to inscribe in a new perspective not only his own initial point of view but equally that of his partner, as well as their interrelationships. Such a frame constitutes therefore a very powerful fulcrum for getting out of a closed loop. This argument emphasizes therefore the importance, on the pedagogical level, of 'reframing strategies', which consist in leading learners engaged in cognitive conflicts to use these metatheoretical (or metacognitive) frames which allow them to get out of their own initial point of view (or mode of cognitive functioning) and to inscribe it in a new perspective, by articulating it in a coherent fashion with the alternative points of view (or modes of functioning) with which they are confronted (Bourgeois and Nizet 1997, p. 108).

Bourgeois's and Nizet's discussion is significant not only because it intersects with McPeck's and Ramsden's analyses of deep learning and critical thinking in terms of the emphasis on change and restructuring but also because it stresses the need for providing learners with cognitive strategies to mobilize new reflective modes in dynamic ways. Literature, and particularly foreign literature, provides an ideal vehicle for

such destabilization of stagnant knowledge loops and the mobilization of alternative cognitive modes and points of view precisely because of its ability to engage readers in its "game," in Lotman's terminology, causing readers, replete with their own schemata, to merge with the text, to experience vicariously the unexpected, particularly in terms of the foreign culture, and to restructure their prior knowledge. Goals of restructured experience, expanded points of view, and significant change in cognitive frames and loops of knowledge are precisely among the objectives of contemporary theories of language learning and teaching as set forth in the *Standards*.

Part IV: Literature and the Foreign Language Standards

The *Standards* (1999) grew out of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (Phillips 1999) and represent an effort to go beyond a limited four-skills view of language education, proposing in the process to change radically current teaching paradigms (Phillips 1999, p. 3). Rather than seeing language study as a fundamentally skills-oriented, self-contained enterprise that only tangentially includes culture in terms of practical competencies, the *Standards* encourage language instruction that focuses on its interdisciplinary implications and ability to influence learners in terms of developing an increased awareness of self and others and in terms of encouraging deep cognitive processing skills.

The explicit role of literature in a *Standards*-based curriculum is as yet problematic, however. Although the *Standards* include literature, its study can be seen as diluted among other language learning goals. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity as to how specifically to use literature in the language classroom and as to how sophisticated interpretations should be (Tucker 2000). Nevertheless, the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the *Standards* suggest a more dynamic use of literature than has been the case in the past, one that articulates well with reader-response and semiotic views of texts and with critical thinking goals. In addressing the significance of the personal in language and literature, Tucker sums up the issue in the following way:

> While the hermeneutic implications of this personal stake in literary criticism—and in literature itself—are far from uncomplicated, a better understanding of how the personal operates in both language and literary studies can serve as a productive point of departure for a critical rethinking of *how*—not *whether*—literature can be taught in a Standards-based curriculum (p. 56).

The *Standards* proposes five interlocking dimensions for language curricula: communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities. Although the first two may at first seem very familiar, their goals are designed to be more expansive than is the case in traditional approaches to language teaching. In terms of communication, classroom formats should veer away from the limited "I-R-E" pattern of teacher initiation—student response—teacher evaluation (Hall 1999, p.25) and instead encourage what Joan Kelly Hall (1999) calls "instructional conversations," which she defines as "... a developmentally rich pattern of teacher-student interaction whose purpose is to assist students' understanding of and ability to communicate about concepts and ideas that are central to their learning" (p. 29). This kind of expansive discourse is crucial to the student's development of complex, internalized knowledge systems, which can only come about through the negotiation of multiple and at times conflicting ideas. Within this context, Hall specifically posits literary analysis in the language classroom as particularly useful for encouraging this kind of deep processing on a communicative dimension (p. 29). Seen in this way, the communicative goal of the *Standards* resonates significantly with what we have discussed previously in terms of critical thinking skills development and a dynamic view of literature.

Literature also plays a crucial role in the teaching of culture according to the *Standards* revised definition of this language learning dimension. As indicated above, culture, which has long been considered an important aspect of instruction, has nevertheless only been superficially integrated into the language curriculum. According to Dale Lange (1999), this is partly due to the lack of consensus as to what constitutes culture, with all its implications of high and low culture, "C" and "c." Also contributing to the ambiguity of a specific pedagogy of culture is its constantly shifting nature (p. 60). Culture, according to Lange, is always in a state of transition. Given this, it is crucial to provide language students the linguistic and cognitive tools necessary to evaluate and interact effectively both with the native and foreign culture in their states of constant flux. This means not restricting the teaching of language to its formal features or to practical and often cognitively limited communicative activities. Instead, instruction must engage students in deep learning formats. Echoing Byrnes (1997), Lange notes that "The [National Standards] study suggests that **if** the emphasis in the progress indicators for these standards is only on cognitive knowledge and comprehension as well as only on affective receiving and responding, **then** students may not necessarily be able to compare, contrast, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate aspects of another culture" (p. 70). Moreover, Lange specifically mentions

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literature as a rich medium for encouraging the dynamic cultural interaction that fosters higher level critical thinking skills. In support of his contentions, Lange cites Michael Byram (1989) who ". . . argues that the full integration of language and culture comes . . . with the examination of literature—not only in the unique representation of the culture by the author, but also as the author represents that culture in general—as well as through experience" (p. 79). For Byram, "Artefacts of literature, music and the like are the expressions both of the idiosyncratic meanings of individuals and also of the systems of meaning which individuals share" (p. 84). In literature particularly, then, linguistics and culture meet in a form that encourages the learner to engage in deep processing activities, for by participating in the multiple textual representations of shared and individual meaning, learners must reconfigure their knowledge structures to incorporate this new information and thereby develop these structures in a more complex way (Byram 1999, p. 115).

Inevitably linked to the *Standards*'s cultural dimension is the goal area of comparison whose foundation, according to Alvino Fantini (1999), rests on the development of higher level critical thinking skills. In studying a foreign language, learners are inevitably forced to compare its underlying linguistic structure with that of their native language and in the process they become aware not only that meaning is expressed differently from language to language, but also that a seemingly stable content unit with a one-to-one correspondence between language signifiers takes on subtle connotative shades (p. 166). Benjamin (1955) eloquently addresses the richness of comparative cultural nuances in "The Task of the Translator" when he notes that the English "bread," German "brot," and French "pain" neither denote nor connote the same signified (p. 74). In comparing language differences, Fantini states that ". . . learners go beneath the surface structure to explore how language expression carries meaning, how meaning is construed in language, and how different languages construe meaning differently" (p. 166).

The effect of linguistic comparison on the individual is far more radical, however. Fantini points out that learners go through very complex translation processes in grappling with their new language. Precisely because of the connotative implications of language, these processes can at times prove both disorienting and enlightening, forcing the learner to consider language and meaning in a new way. According to Fantini:

> This process of converting perception to thought and thought to language . . . requires fragmenting holistic *experience* in accordance with

> the existing *word categories* in one's own tongue, since the words of languages are discrete units, conveyed only one at a time . . . In this way, language serves as a basic classificatory system, segmenting and fragmenting our notions of the world into available word categories while also grouping and combining categories of words in other ways (p. 180).

Fantini's analysis of the fragmenting effect of language learning intersects significantly with McPeck's, Ramsden's and particularly Bourgeois's and Nizet's discussion of deep cognitive processing, where in order for learning to take place, the learner's knowledge structures must, in fact, first be shattered and then restructured to include the new disruptive information. And because the human conscious can be understood as a linguistic conscious (Lotman 1973), language learning itself indeed provokes a profound effect on cognition. For Fantini, this effect contributes significantly to the development of alternative ways of thinking, of zigzag thinking, of seeing the world anew (p. 183). Literature can play an important role in fostering alternative thinking and language learning precisely because it casts language into original forms, forms which, as we have seen with Barthes and others, multiply connotations and fragment and reconfigure words in new and creative ways.

The process of reading literature for the foreign language learner is a complex one, however. As Lotman points out, the literary text, which can be considered a secondary modeling system overlaid on the primary linguistic system of natural language (p. 36), engages the language learner in a dynamic double translation activity, first in interacting with the language itself and then with its artistic manifestations. In the literary text, therefore, the effects of language learning are multiplied because one of the goals of reading is ". . . to explain how a text becomes the carrier of a specific thought—of an idea—, how the structure of a text relates to the structure of this idea . . ." (Lotman 1973, p. 31). The skills of language learning are thus essential to analyzing literature, not only because the text exemplifies the linguistic features of grammar and vocabulary in context but also because these features create unique ways of meaning that the learner comes to understand. Moreover, as Fantini suggests, in working with literature the learner's knowledge and cultural structures also undergo profound changes, for in grappling with the text, students must also come to terms with a new culture as uniquely represented therein. A consequence of foreign language reading is, then, that learners also cast in a new light their comprehension of their own culture and their place in it.

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Given our shifting understanding of the nature of literature, its effect on language acquisition, and the double effect of language and literature on cognition, it becomes clear that texts can no longer be taught in the language classroom as in the past—as an excuse for vocabulary or grammar work, or as a cultural artifact. Superficial approaches are no longer adequate to the educational challenges now set before us. However, in that literary texts are so complex, a major question presents itself, namely how to teach literature effectively within its dynamic context to students whose language skills are in process and avoid at the same time the cognitive overload that might make the reading and discussion of texts a disconcerting experience. It is the practical classroom implications of the literary text that we will explore in the next section.

Part V: The Pedagogy of the Literary Text

In "Constructing Curricula in Collegiate Foreign Language Departments," Heidi Byrnes (1998) outlines the weaknesses and dangers of poorly articulated college language/literature programs and the flaws of deferring pedagogical responsibility for learner outcomes to textbook choice (p. 271). Having encountered over fifteen years ago precisely the problems Byrnes recently delineates, the intermediate French program at the University of California at Berkeley was radically revised in 1986 in several ways. First, other than a reference grammar, textbooks were eliminated and replaced with course readers containing pedagogical materials specifically designed to target the language, critical thinking, and writing goals necessary for students' success in upper division courses at Berkeley. Second, the curriculum was based on a language-through-literature approach designed to provide students experience in dealing with texts such as they would be asked to do in upper-division courses. Third, intermediate program text selection was made both with the students' level of French and with the third-year advanced reading and composition course curriculum in mind. Fourth, a rigorous composition component was designed to target students' writing skills (see Schultz 1999, 1995, 1994, 1991a, 1991b). The revised program produced immediate positive results in terms of student language skills, critical thinking skills within a literary context, and in terms of smooth lower to upper-division program articulation. Faculty teaching the third-year course, who have been interviewed concerning student preparedness every semester since the program's inception in 1986, have consistently expressed satisfaction with their students' abilities to handle texts, discuss them, and write about them in French. The following discussion of the

pedagogy of the literary text within the intermediate-level foreign language curriculum can thus be couched within the context of a program that has afforded much experimentation in the effective incorporation of literature.

The decision to use literature as the primary curricular component coupled with the elimination of any intermediate program textbook has radical implications for language pedagogy, particularly given that the majority of the multisectioned intermediate courses at Berkeley are taught by graduate student instructors, most of whom are working on doctorates in literature but who have limited training in language acquisition theory as well as limited experience in teaching. All sections must thus be parallel in terms of curriculum and yet take into account the differences of both instructors and students as individuals who will respond and interact uniquely to texts. Moreover, given the preceding discussion concerning the complex and multidimensional nature of the literary text, flexible and dynamic approaches are the only ones appropriate to "writerly" texts and at the same time capable of accommodating language/literature, departmental, teacher, and student goals. Pedagogical seminars at each course level are essential to the viability of an individually tailored program; and consequently, all instructors in the program are required to take the appropriate seminar for the French course they currently teach.

Both semesters of the intermediate French program are fundamentally organized around the reading of one short prose text per week, either a short story or a play, for the first seven weeks of the fifteen week semester. For the last six weeks, students read longer works, but over a two-week period for each text. Mid-semester, there is a two or three week poetry unit (see Schultz 1996). Classes meet five days per week. At each level, one day per week is devoted to grammar review, among other language activities, such as oral reports. The approach to literature can be conceived in terms of three basic principles with three substeps:

1. An introductory experiential activity designed to mobilize students' personal schemata and thereby increase receptivity to textual issues.
   a. A closing creative activity.
2. Training in techniques of close readings designed to target language issues not only as they pertain to form but more importantly as they pertain to meaning.
   a. Close reading group discussion activities.

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3. General discussion of larger textual issues of theme, motif, setting, characterization, symbolization, and intentionality, etc.
   a. Group discussion of individual paper topics.

Because the approach is based on principles rather than on specific techniques, it is extremely flexible from multiple points of view. Various iterations of it can be used with virtually any text. Teachers can adhere to the principles and yet incorporate their own interpretations into class discussion, thus increasing their personal commitment to their teaching. They can also tailor general discussion to student interactions with the text, according more time as necessary to a topic that may particularly have sparked student interest. In close readings, students focus on language learning basics, vocabulary, and grammar, but go beyond traditional surface-level approaches by attending to how these elements create complex meaning. Moreover, they acquire both the linguistic and interpretive skills necessary to go on in French. In fact, the skills that students develop in the process of learning a new language, of focusing on the intricate relationship between form and meaning, of paying attention to linguistic detail and reconstituting meaning, contribute to the development of their interpretive reading skills. Finally, students are encouraged to enter into a phase of "reflective skepticism" in regard to their own culture and the target culture, and in the process they begin to define themselves differently.

In discussing the above six principles used in the intermediate French program at Berkeley, I will illustrate their application with activities designed to accompany Émile Zola's short story "The Attack on the Mill" (Baker and Cauvin 1995, pp. 107–30), which students in French 3 (first semester of the intermediate program) read during the last two weeks of the semester. The story, which centers on the tragic love story between the miller's daughter, Françoise, and her Belgian neighbor Dominique, who is ultimately killed, is set against the backdrop of the Franco-Prussian war.

The Value of Experiential Approaches

In her essay addressing the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to language teaching in a *Standards*-guided curriculum, Miriam Met supports her contention with research showing that learners do not construct meaning in a void, but rather use prior knowledge to access new knowledge (Met 1999, p. 138). The implications of this point, which intersects with work done by Bourgeois and Nizet (1997) and in schema theory (Rumelhart 1981; Swaffar 1988), is

significant for language students. In their work with literature, students need to be able to relate initially to texts on their own terms, drawing on their personal schemata as a point of departure for more objective interpretation. For language learners, an initial personal reaction is particularly important precisely because they do not necessarily have ready access to the cultural underpinnings of the text. Grappling with the text from their own perspective first avoids the short-circuiting of critical reflection that can occur if, for instance, texts are first presented solely as a product of the author's life and times.

Each text used in the intermediate French program is thus first introduced using an experiential activity designed to mobilize students personal schemata and to encourage their oral communicative skills. It is far less cognitively taxing for language learners to discuss personal experiences than to enter into analytical discussions where they must support and defend their interpretations (ACTFL 1986). These activities can assume many forms based on the dynamics of the specific literary text under discussion. Perhaps the most common activity used in the program is the "quick-write" in which students are given five minutes in class to write on a prompt related thematically to the text. If a text deals with childhood, students will be asked to write on an event from their past. For a fantastic text used in the program, students are asked to write about a supernatural experience they have had or that someone they know has had (see Schultz 1995). In the poetry segments, students routinely write on thematic prompts connected to the poem they will be discussing (see Schultz 1996). With all of these exercises, students are asked to share their writing with a group of three peers, thus encouraging their oral production as well as their written competence. After about ten minutes of discussion, each group selects one example that is shared with the entire class. At this point, the instructor works with the material presented, writes main ideas on the board, and tries to make connections with some of the textual issues students will encounter in their reading. This opening activity thus lays the groundwork for greater receptivity and ultimately better reading comprehension.

For Zola's text, the setting plays a significant role in highlighting the disastrous consequences of war. As the battle progresses, features of the countryside, as well as the mill and an old elm tree, are systematically destroyed. The story opens with a lengthy and rich description of the town and its surroundings, a description crucial to the narrative effect, but one replete with unfamiliar vocabulary that can prove linguistically challenging to intermediate-level students. Because Zola's text depends on the ability to visualize the scene, the introductory

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experiential activity is organized around a collaborative drawing exercise where students work in groups of three and mine the text for specific detail in order to come up with a sketch of what the setting might look like. Students, thus, must talk together in French and reach an agreement as to what visual information to include. Moreover, they must read very carefully for detail and accuracy. At the end of the designated time, about fifteen minutes, students share their sketches with the entire class. At this point, their work is evaluated for accuracy both by other classmates and by the teacher. This activity allows the instructor to check for basic comprehension and to address any surface-level vocabulary or grammar issues. More importantly, however, students have already begun the preliminary process of text analysis, using a sense, visualization, that is often neglected in language curricula (Schwerdtfeger 1994).

The closing experiential activity for the "The Attack on the Mill" takes its cue from the introductory exercise. In the course of discussion, instructors help students to take stock of Zola's visual techniques, which operate much like a movie camera, encompassing wide panoramas or zooming in to focus on small details. Moreover, the story is very action-packed and suspenseful, with Françoise scaling a wall at one point to save Dominique's life and later frantically searching the woods in which he is hiding in order to save her father, who will be shot in Dominique's place unless he returns. Students then are asked in their closing activity to assume the role of a movie director and to work again in groups of three to discuss details of how they would write the screen play for one of the five chapters in Zola's story. They must cast the various roles, go over the cinematographic techniques they would use for the filming, and discuss any other aspects necessary for their production. The fact that the activity taps into cinema, which is widely appreciated by American college students, together with its somewhat lighthearted orientation make this an appealing and creative exercise with which to close the text, placing students very much in the "writerly" role.

Close Reading Techniques

The experiential activities are very valuable for their personal appeal; they have a mobilizing effect on individual schemata and generate discussion crucial for oral skills development. However, because they tend to originate from a subjective base, they do not encourage deep learning to the extent that other textual approaches can (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1987). Moreover, in overlaying personal schemata on texts, students do run the risk of misreading, of relying too much on "'mnemonic irrelevances' or failure to follow texts closely because

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contingent memories and associations get in the way" (Durant 1996 p. 85; see also Rumelhart 1981). In order to guard against misreading and to encourage critical thinking, the most rigorous and fundamental of the pedagogical principles used in the intermediate French program involves close readings. This technique, which is key to sophisticated literary analysis, plays an essential role in bridging the gap between language and literary studies; for in focusing on discrete components of carefully selected passages, students analyze the vocabulary for both its denotative and connotative meanings and grammatical structures, not only as exemplars of linguistic rules but also as vehicles of unique significance.

For virtually every text in the program, instructors lead their students in a close reading of the introduction, which invariably establishes many of the themes and motifs in a short-story. Moreover, in analyzing the introduction with the teacher, students from the outset feel grounded in their reading and better able to handle the rest of the text on their own. Because the drawing activity focuses on the first three paragraphs of Zola's text, students begin their teacher-guided close reading in the fourth paragraph. Here Zola presents a personified portrait of the mill built on paradoxes which highlight its crucial role in the story.

> Et c'était là que le moulin du père Merlier égayait de son tic-tac un coin de verdures folles. La bâtisse, faite de plâtre et de planches, semblait vieille comme le monde. Elle trempait à moitié dans la Morelle, qui arrondit à cet endroit un clair bassin. Une écluse était ménagée, la chute tombait de quelques mètres sur la roue du moulin, qui craquait en tournant, avec la toux asthmatique d'une fidèle servante vieillie dans la maison. Quand on conseillait au père Merlier de la changer, il hochait la tête en disant qu'une jeune roue serait paresseuse et ne connaîtrait pas si bien le travail; et il raccommodait l'ancienne avec tout ce qui lui tombait sous la main, des douves de tonneau, des ferrures rouillées, du zinc, du plomb. La roue en paraissait plus gaie, avec son profil devenu étrange, toute empanachée d'herbes et de mousses. Lorsque l'eau la battait de son flot d'argent, elle se couvrait de perles, on voyait passer son étrange carcasse sous une parure éclatante de colliers de nacre (Baker and Cauvin 1995, p. 108).[3]

Instructors proceed sentence by sentence though the passage asking students to respond to and to interpret what Zola might mean by specific lexical choices. In sentence one, what image is evoked in the combined vocabulary of "cheered up," "tick-tock," and "crazy vegetation"? In sentences two and three, what is the effect of the alliteration in "plâtre" and "planches" [plaster and boards] and of the hyperbolic

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metaphor that the mill is "as old as the world"? In the fourth sentence, why does Zola compare the cracking sound of the turning mill wheel to "the asthmatic cough of a faithful, old house servant"? In sentence five, what is the force of the personification designating a new wheel as lazy and not knowing the work as well? To what semantic category does the brick-a-brack the miller uses to patch the old wheel belong? Why is this important to the visual image created? In sentence six, why is the word "empanaché" "decked out with plumes" particularly appropriate? In the last sentence, what vocabulary is associated with precious jewelry? What metaphorical image underlies this vocabulary? How is the image paradoxical? How does the word "carcass" further differentiate the image? Finally, what past tense form predominates in the passage and why? These are just some of the questions instructors can ask their students as they work through this passage. Students' preliminary interpretations will eventually become all the more significant within the context of the rest of the story when the eventual battle will lay waste this idyllic scene. Zola's vocabulary evoking illness and death thus functions early on as a foreshadowing of tragic future events. In working through the text in this way, fragmenting it and reconstituting it, students thus learn important interpretative literary principles at the same time that they grapple with the elements of language.

In addition to the systematic analysis of introductions, principles of close readings can be incorporated intermittently throughout each literary unit to focus on significant passages that the instructor feels are important to emphasize. A second iteration of the close reading technique is moved to a small group format. For each text, the course reader contains sets of group discussion exercises pertaining to selected passages, each of which is divided into sections or movements and for which there is a set of detailed questions such as presented above. According to this format, students work together in small groups, asking and answering the questions in their assigned section. At the end of the designated time, they are asked to make a presentation to the entire class, always emphasizing the significance of their observations. Rather than simply repeat back their answers to the questions, however, the designated speaker for each group must, with the help of his or her peers, synthesize the collective findings, presenting an analytical and interpretative summary of them. The rest of the class is asked to take notes and to comment after each minipresentation. Students thus must work on their critical thinking skills at the same time that they develop their oral skills. The exercise is well structured to meet the cognitive demands of the class, moving from simpler tasks of answering questions with the help of a small group of peers to

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more complex ones of synthesizing and theorizing. An additional benefit of the group discussion exercises is that in terms of classroom management, they are extremely economical, allowing instructors to cover significant portions of texts in a relatively short time period.

Discussion of Larger Textual Issues in the Language Classroom

Instructors teaching in the intermediate French program report that student response to close reading techniques, which are new to American students, is very positive. However, inasmuch as close reading is intense and detail-oriented, when dealing with entire texts, it is neither practical nor does it maintain student interest over a prolonged period. American students simply are more experienced from previous English literature classes in dealing with larger textual issues and therefore welcome such discussion in the foreign language classroom. Moreover, broader-based textual discussion provides students with different types of analytical tools. Rather than the fine, detailed analysis of close readings, broader-based discussion encourages students to think synthetically, to generalize from textual evidence, to theorize, and to engage in Hall's (1999) "instructional conversations."

Because all texts are unique, general discussion of themes, characterization, setting, symbols, motifs, and the like is the most difficult area to deal with in terms of a systematic pedagogy common to all intermediate program sections. An important issue in one text simply doesn't exist in another; a rigid template for the pedagogy of the literary text would therefore be impossible to overlay successfully on every work. Moreover, even if such a template could be developed, it would violate the very underpinnings of the literary text, essentially turning a "writable" into a "readable" work.

In terms of Zola's text, characterization has proven a valuable starting point for general discussion in part because the author constructs the text around bipolar oppositions. The miller is described, for example, as being "happy on the inside but serious on the outside." In contrast, his daughter is "serious on the inside but cheerful on the outside." The initial presentation of Dominique is of the stereotypical handsome, lazy seducer. The reader soon discovers, however, that once engaged to Françoise, Dominique is a devoted companion and a hard worker. Perhaps the most telling opposition centers on the French captain and the Prussian officer. Here Zola both plays with national stereotypes, the French captain as dashing soldier and the Prussian as cold and rigid commander, and subverts those very stereotypes. The French captain becomes a buffoon by adhering rigidly to his orders to hold the mill until six o'clock sharp, whereas he should

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retreat much sooner to save his men. The Prussian officer is only too willing to violate his orders to accomplish his military purposes. In working with the characterizations in this particular text, then, students are constantly put in the position of McPeck's (1981) reflective skeptic, as they analyze characters in terms of their oppositions and eventually generate theories as to Zola's purpose in dismantling stereotypes, particularly within the context of a short story highly critical of armed conflict. Discussion of the text on this basis inevitably takes students into other areas. Connections can be made with the contemporary situation in other countries where conflict drawn along stereotyped ethnic or religious lines is a fact of life. Cultural stereotypes in general are an equally fruitful area for discussion. Students thus hone their analytical skills in terms of literature, as well as reflect on their own prejudices and stereotypes with regard to other cultures. In short, they are encouraged to integrate potentially disruptive material into their knowledge loops and, therefore, to restructure their experience.

Characterization is, of course, only one aspect of any text. In "The Attack on the Mill," the highly personified setting plays an important role. In addition to the visual, Zola also uses various sounds to highlight events. There is a motif of fate with which Zola, in fatalistic fashion, seems to indicate that characters are ultimately powerless to alter their destiny. The language itself, which is often highly metaphorical, provides an additional area of investigation. This list is not exhaustive, nor do each of these elements need to be covered during the two weeks that students work on Zola's text. The point is that instructors have a whole series of topics at their disposal. In approaching any one area, it is useful to start in summary fashion with the "what" of the topic. However, discussion cannot stay on this level of lower order questions (Long 1986, p. 48), which is characteristic of traditional approaches to texts in language classrooms where comprehension checks tend to dominate. As Ramsden's (1992) work demonstrates, instructors must quickly veer off the "what" to deal with the "how" and "why" of the text. How does Zola use sound imagery or the setting and why does he use it in this way? Can we go back into the text, particularly to the beginning, and see how symbols of fate are working? Why does Zola seem to be so pessimistic as to the positive effects of human effort? Responses to this last question can lead to a brief discussion of the Naturalist movement in France, which provides students additional, historical and cultural information, but only after they have dealt with significant portions of the text. Instead of filtering Zola's text through a literary category, as students are tempted to do if texts are presented as products of a specific literary movement, they have first interacted with the text on their own terms and thus now see the historical

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material as illuminating, but not the *raison d'être* of the text and the only explanation of it.

Additional thematic issues can be dealt with effectively in the final pedagogical principle outlined above. For each text read in the intermediate French program, students are asked to write a short analytical paper such as they would write in an English class and as will be expected of them in their upper division French literature and culture courses. Because of the problematic nature of argumentative writing (see Schultz 1991b), specific composition lessons are integrated into the curriculum. One way to provide students with preliminary direction for their eventual essays as well as deal with multiple textual aspects in an efficient manner is through discussion of the essay topics in a small group format. The day before the activity, students are asked to select the essay topic that interests them most and to think about how they would organize their paper. The next day, instructors group students according to the topic they have selected and ask them to talk about it for about fifteen minutes. At the end of the time, students share the highlights of their discussion with the entire class, again generating further debate about the issues raised.

The six principles outlined above are not presented in sequential fashion but rather are integrated in alternating fashion in order to vary the linguistic and cognitive skills targeted. The initial work on a text always begins with the low stress introductory experiential activity and is followed by the more intense close reading of the introduction. The movement is therefore from personal to analytical. Instructors then move to thematic discussion, incorporating additional close readings, often in the form of the group discussion exercises, as warranted. Students thus alternate between detailed, fragmenting work and synthesizing, theoretical efforts. Towards the end of the unit, attention turns to the paper topic discussion in small group fashion. The final wrap-up of the text involves again a more experientially oriented activity that addresses students' personal creativity in the foreign language, thus making them also, in a sense, producers of imaginative and artistic "texts."

Conclusion

I began this paper by referring to Grittner's (1990) work on recurrent trends in foreign language pedagogy precisely because the current interest in literature seems at first blush to hark back to a very traditionalist stance. Indeed, given that there is a large body of published material on the incorporation of literature in the language classroom (Carter and McRae 1996; Collie and Slater 1987; Lazar 1993; Simpson

1997), in addition to the existence of language textbooks that include selections from literature, the very logic behind a renewed discussion of the subject might be put into question. It may well be claimed that literature has always had some role in the language curriculum. However, in tracing the shifting view of literature from historical and cultural artifact to dynamic, plural text that comes into being via interactions with individual readers, and in outlining the potential effect literature can have on cognitive processing skills and on personal and cultural understanding, it becomes apparent that the current interest in literature derives from a very different spirit. As the *Standards* demonstrate, foreign language learning can no longer be seen as an isolated field. Instead, it is an endeavor with significant implications, complementing and adding to the dynamism of other disciplines and increasing our understanding of our own and other cultures on profound levels. In the process of working with a foreign language and its literature, moreover, students learn more about themselves and their personal identity. At the same time, as Fantini in particular suggests, they also develop their critical thinking abilities. For the cognitive strategies that come into play in the process of learning a foreign language—the fragmenting and reconstituting, the synthesizing and generalizing—are precisely the strategies that come into play in the literary text. The difference resides within the movement from micro to macrolevels, where in literature, readers extend their work with language on multiple dimensions, factoring themselves into texts through identification with and differentiation from characters, through plot participation, and through the experience of new or dormant emotions. In focusing on literature in the language classroom, then, we are not returning once again to the same old thing reconfigured in a new trend. Language curricula already have significant experience approaching texts in a "readerly" fashion. Now in order to respond to new developments on multiple educational planes, literature in the language curriculum must be approached from a "writerly" stance.

Notes

1. All translations from French are my own.
2. Although generally considered a lower order activity, plot summary is not necessarily so. See Nash 1986, p. 70.
3. And it was there that father Merlier's mill cheered up a corner of crazy vegetation with its tick-tock. The building, made of plaster and planks, seemed as old as the world. It half soaked in the Morelle, which formed a clear round basin in this place. A lock was fitted into the millstream, the waterfall fell from several meters onto the wheel of the mill, which cracked while

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turning, with the asthmatic cough of a faithful servant who had grown old in the household. When people advised father Merlier to change it, he shook his head saying that a young wheel would be lazier and wouldn't know the work as well; and he patched the old one with everything that fell into his hands, with barrel staves, rusted iron fittings, zinc, lead. Because of this, the wheel seemed more gay, with its strange profile, all decked out with plumes of weeds and mosses. When the water would hit it with its stream of silver, it would be covered with pearls; people would see its strange carcass pass through a brilliant set of mother-of-pearl necklaces.

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